

edward johnson building
faculty of music
university of toronto



SUNDAY CONCERTS

DOUGLAS BODLE, HARPSICHORD
JANE COOP, PIANO
CHRISTINE LITTLE, FLUTE
DAVID SMITH, ORGAN
DOUGLAS STEWART, FLUTE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 1979

3 P.M.

WALTER HALL

Next Event: U of T Orchestra, January 27, 1979, MacMillan Theatre
8.30 p.m.

Next Sunday Concert: February 18, 1979, 3 p.m. Walter Hall.

P R O G R A M

In a program of music selected from works of the Bach family, it is not surprising that almost all of them should be in some sense "borrowed", or at least performed in a medium not originally intended. Liszt's transcription of the prelude and fugue in A minor is a clear case. In the organ works, Bach "the borrower" adapted styles of composition found in choral (the Kyrie from the Clavierübung is in a sense an 'organ motet') and instrumental music (the trio sonata was first designed for one or two solo instruments and keyboard, and concerto elements can clearly be seen in the Prelude and Fugue in E minor). Finally, the autograph of the C.P.E. Bach trio had on its title page "Trio for 2 flutes, or for Clavier and one flute". C.P.E. Bach later crossed out the words "for 2 flutes, or", so it is often assumed that the solo flute version is the original and what we are hearing today an arrangement. Adaptation, transcription, and using one style of composition in a new medium are all important aspects of composition in the 18th century.

Prelude and fugue in A minor (BWV 543) J. S. Bach
(transcribed for piano by Franz Liszt (1811-1886) (1685-1750)

This Prelude and Fugue, which dates from around 1720, shows influences of Buxtehude, Pachelbel and Corelli, and is similar in overall design to Bach's own Prelude and Fugue in A minor for clavier. It is one of the works in which the fugue resolves the tension built by the strong dissonances of the prelude. Perhaps it was this feature, or, more likely, the cadenza at the end of the fugue, which attracted Liszt to it. Concerning the transcription, it is well to remember that the practice of performing symphonies, songs, opera excerpts, overtures and chamber music on the piano was virtually universal for concert pianists in the 19th century. Liszt's transcription is, however, quite faithful to the original.

Jane Coop, piano

Kyrie III "Gott heiliger Geist" from the Clavierübung
Part III (BWV 671)

J. S. Bach

Sonata #6 in G major (BWV 530)
Vivace - Lento - Allegro

Prelude and Fugue in E minor (BWV 548)

Towards the end of his life, J. S. Bach devoted much of his energy toward the collection and systematization of works which contained the essence of his musical ideas. This is due in part to the fact that very little of his music was published during his lifetime. Part III of the Clavierübung (Keyboard Exercises) which appeared in 1739 is one such work, and the first published collection of his organ music. In it, Bach set the most important items of the Lutheran Catechism as choral preludes. This Kyrie is a grand 5-part 'organ motet' with the imitative texture beginning right at the start; the cantus firmus appears in complete form in the pedals. Particularly noticeable is the coda, whose chromaticism finds a counterpart only in the 'Crucifixus' of the B minor Mass and the last Counterpoint of the 'Art of Fugue'.

The "Six Sonatas for Two Manuals and Pedal" are from Bach's Leipzig period. Their title leaves in question whether they were intended for clavichord with pedal (of which Bach owned three) or organ. They were written as studies for his oldest son Wilhelm Friedemann, and, due to their intricate contrapuntal treatment, with much crossing of hands, remain a true test of organ technique.

Of the massive Prelude and Fugue in E minor, also from the Leipzig period, Philipp Spitta said "it should be called an organ symphony in two movements". It is more than the work's scale which suggests this association for structurally it has gone beyond the designation prelude and fugue. The prelude, always structurally self-sufficient and unique, is remarkable for its homogeneity of thematic material. The descending melodic progression of the opening motive informs the whole movement. The fugue has a three-part form in which the middle section is really a toccata. Concerto elements are present, especially in the complete reprise of the principal section. Such a combination of fugue, concerto and toccata is virtually unique.

David Smith, organ

Trio in E major

C.P.E. Bach

Allegretto

Adagio di molto

Allegro assai

Carl Phillip Emmanuel, perhaps the most illustrious of J.S. Bach's many sons, wrote this trio in 1749 while in the service of Frederick the Great of Prussia. Phillip Emmanuel was the official accompanist for the "enlightened despot", who, besides being a great general, was an accomplished flutist. This trio was undoubtedly written for Frederick and his flute master Johann Quantz. The first performance was probably in one of Frederick's sumptuous castles in a great hall, lit by candlelight chandeliers. What the music sounded like is another matter. Apparently, the monarch had a rather poor sense of time. At one soiree musicale when an enthusiastic guest said to the king, "What rhythm!", C.P.E. Bach replied audibly, "What rhythms!"

Although Frederick's tastes in music were restricted to a courtly style galant, this trio clearly shows C.P.E. Bach's original genius (Charles Burney, that indefatigable social commentator of the 18th century, said of Berlin that "Though a universal toleration prevails here as to different sects of Christians, yet, in music, whoever dares to possess any other tenets than those of Graun and Quantz is sure to be persecuted"). Written in the usual fast-slow-fast arrangement, the work shows many bold chromaticisms, especially in the second movement where there is even a diminished octave on a main beat just before the end. It also shows C.P.E. Bach's intermediate position between the High Baroque ideal of a single affection per movement and the classical ideal of a dynamic movement from exposition through development to return. In the first movement, areas of stability, easily recognized by the lovely soaring theme, alternate with areas of melodic and harmonic ambiguity. The second movement displays a similar structure, and is highly expressive in its use of chromatic scales, both in the basso continuo and the melody. The final movement is captivating by its gigue-like character and features such as the ending to both halves of the movement where the two flutes play little unaccompanied fanfares. Although Frederick may have been shocked at this trio's daring, today we can appreciate it as genuinely inspired work.

Christine Little, Douglas Stewart, flutes
Douglas Bodle, harpsichord

Notes by David Fallis